

SYSTEM CONFIGURATION TEAM (SCT)

Reasonable and Prudent Measure #26

Meeting Notes

December 18, 2003

1. Greetings and Introductions.

The December 18, 2003 meeting of the System Configuration Team was held at the NOAA Fisheries offices in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was chaired by Bill Hevlin of NOAA Fisheries. The agenda and a list of attendees are attached as Enclosures A and B. Hevlin led a round of introductions and a review of today's agenda.

The following is a summary, not a verbatim transcript, of items discussed at the meeting, together with the actions taken on those items. Please note that some of the enclosures referenced may be too lengthy to routinely include with the meeting notes; copies of these documents may be obtained by contacting Kathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420.

2. Funding and Spreadsheet Update for FY'04 CRFM Program.

John Kranda distributed the most recent draft of the FY'04 CRFM spreadsheet, dated December 18. He noted that the spreadsheet is essentially unchanged from the last one he provided, but said there are a number of notes that deserve the SCT's attention. We're still somewhat in the dark about what our actual work allowance will be, he said; we were assuming 16%-18% savings and slippage, which would mean that our \$85 million appropriation will be whittled down to about \$70 million. We're still leaning toward overprogramming somewhat, funding projects up to line 61 of the spreadsheet, but have heard rumors that there may be deeper cuts in the Corps budget, so there may be a need to be more cautious, Kranda said. By the January SCT meeting, the uncertainty about how aggressive we can be hopefully will be resolved.

Kranda noted that there are some issues stirring within the spreadsheet which could impact available funding:

- Ice Harbor RSW construction: the estimate of how much contract funding can be placed in FY'04 has been reduced
- B1 surface bypass (line 55) – reduced by \$100,000
- Bonneville studies: the two-treatment issue has yet to be resolved, a potential financial

- impact of up to \$3.3 million, depending on which option is chosen.
- The Dalles spillway and sluiceway survival study
- Estuary avian predation: there is interest in expanding this study
- Line 42: McNary turbine survival above 1%: some question whether this actually should be funded under the CRFM program
- Line 52: system summer spill tests: BPA would like to add a second treatment, which would cost an additional \$2 million+.
- Line 53, Lower Granite surface bypass

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to these line-items; Kranda noted that all PIT-tags have to be ordered by January 15, so all PIT-tag study decisions have to be made by then. He added that the total cost of the program up to line-item 61 varies between \$73.1 million and \$77.1 million, depending on which options are chosen for various line-items.

The discussion then turned to the discussion of line-item 42 (McNary turbine survival above 1%) at yesterday's Federal Executives meeting. The Executives discussed three alternative study approaches: collect baseline data within 1% with gatewell monitoring, baseline studies with powerhouse operating outside 1%, and a two-treatment full powerhouse study, to get baseline data on full powerhouse operation both inside and outside 1% (the \$3 million study). If the latter option is chosen, this would result in an increase of the cost of this line-item to at least \$2.2 million, and possible to \$3 million+.

My understanding is that we are to talk more about study design options and report back to the executives next week, Kim Fodrea said. Steve Rainey said NOAA Fisheries supports only the SRWG option. Fodrea noted that, from Bonneville's perspective, it may not make sense to spend \$3 million to study this issue, given that the survival difference may be too small to measure, if we can measure it at all – it may be better to take a chance and go ahead and operate outside 1%, and do some studies at the same time. If we can keep up with the debris cleaning needs of such an operation, that's the key variable, in terms of good survival, she said -- if we can't keep up with the debris cleaning, then we'll know. BPA has estimated the financial effect of operating outside 1% at McNary at \$12 million.

After a few minutes of discussion, it was noted that there will be a follow-up telephone call on this issue among the three agency staffs tomorrow. At that meeting, the Corps will need to weigh whether to agree with BPA's strong recommendation, or to seek a broader SCT consensus. We'll also need to decide whether this study fits within the CRFM program, said Kranda, because the Corps has made it clear that we do not have the money to fund a \$3.3 million turbine study at McNary this year.

Ultimately, it was reiterated that the McNary turbine survival study design issue will be revisited at an interagency conference call tomorrow; the SCT will discuss this issue further once additional information is available. Hevlin said NOAA Fisheries would prefer Option 1: the existing research plan with PIT tags, despite the additional cost of \$2.2 million.

3. Ice Harbor RSW Update.

Hevlin distributed copies of the three letters received from the states and tribes regarding the accelerated RSW construction program: from Idaho, from Oregon and from CRITFC. The executives were informed of these positions at yesterday's meeting, he said. In a nutshell, said Kranda, there was agreement to keep moving forward with the current program, which would have the RSW operational at Ice Harbor by 2005, which means design and construction in FY'04. It was understood that there will be more information available about the injury and mortality issues at that Ice Harbor after this year, he said; there was general understanding at that meeting that those injury problems are separate from the RSW question.

Kranda noted that CRITFC is the only agency that objected to Ice Harbor RSW construction going forward on a fast track. Modeling work will be proceeding for the Lower Monumental RSW, Kranda added; if we're going to switch the next priority to Little Goose, rather than Lower Monumental, we need to make that decision by mid-January to avoid sunk costs on Lower Monumental. It was noted that, at yesterday's executives meeting, the SCT was charged to develop a recommendation as to which project should be next on the RSW priority list.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the criteria on which that decision should be based; in particular, to the question of which project would yield the greatest biological benefit. Hevlin noted that, at yesterday's executives meeting, Greg Delwiche raised the question of why the region isn't discussing an RSW at John Day; the answer was that a comprehensive John Day plan is supposed to be under development.

Hevlin distributed an excerpt from the relevant sections of the BiOp, with respect to developing installation objectives for the RSW program. He noted that the BiOp contains considerable guidance on this topic. The group went briefly through this information. Hevlin said that, in his opinion, the John Day RSW concept, which has been previously investigated, then rejected, needs to be revisited. The group discussed various potential criteria, including the 98% project survival standard in the BiOp. Ultimately, Hevlin said he had been asked to write a letter of response on this issue, and will incorporate the various perspectives raised in the course of today's meeting. He noted, however, that in the absence of state or tribal representatives at today's meeting, today's discussion had included only the perspective of the federal parties.

4. Update on Bonneville '04 Juvenile Survival Study Plan.

This topic was not discussed at today's meeting.

5. B2 Corner Collector Hydraulics and Potential Modifications.

This topic was not discussed at today's meeting.

6. Next SCT Meeting Date.

The next System Configuration Team meeting was set for January 15. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle.